

Message Text

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SUBJECT: POLEMICS IN COLOMBIAN LABOR MOVEMENT OVER
INTER-AMERICAN FOUNDATION (IAF) GRANT TO UNION OF
COLOMBIAN WORKERS (UTC)

REF: BOGOTA 0528

MEXICO CITY FOR O GRADY

UUCINCSO FOR POLAD

SUMMARY. AS ANTICIPATED REFTTEL, STRONG NEGATIVE RE-
ACTION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS CONFEDERATION (CTC) TO IAF
GRANT TO UTC HAS CAUSED SEVERE STRAIN IN RELATIONS BE-
TWEEN THE TWO LABOR CONFEDERATIONS. THE CONFLICT MAY
BE AIRED IN THE INTERNATIONAL FORUM OF THE ORIT MTG
SCHEDULED FOR JAN 26 IN MEXICO CITY. END SUMMARY

1. CALI EDITION OF EL TIEMPO JAN 21 CARRIED INTERVIEW
WITH CTC PRESIDENT MERCADO, WHO REPORTEDLY SAID THAT
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THE CONDUCT OF UTC PRESIDENT TULIO CUEVAS IN UNILATERALLY

SECURING THE IAG GRANT WAS "INAPPROPRIATE" WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THAT WE HAVE BEEN FIGHTING TOGETHER FOR MANY YEARS ON BEHALF OF THE WORKERS BANK". MERCADO AND OTHER SOURCES HAVE ALSO INFORMED THE LABOR ATTACHE THAT MERCADO ON JAN 17 OR 18 DENOUNCED THE IAF GRANT IN RADIO INTERVIEWS AS "THE WORST KIND OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM". EMBASSY HAS BEEN UNABLE TO DETERMINE IF THESE RADIO INTERVIEWS HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN BROADCAST. UTC SECRETARY GENERAL CARRILLO HAS TOLD MEDIA THAT UTC DOES NOT WISH TO ENGAGE IN POLEMICS WITH MERCADO.

2. CUEVAS CALLED LABOR ATTACHE TO HIS OFFICE ON JAN 21. HE SAID HE RESENTED USG INTERFERENCE IN DOMESTIC MATTERS AND IMPLIED THAT LABOR ATTACHE WAS SPOKESMAN FOR MERCADO. CUEVAS APPEARED SATISFIED WITH EXPLANATION THAT EMBASSY'S ONLY INTEREST WAS IN ASSURING THAT USG POLICY OF EVEN-HANDEDNESS WAS BEING MAINTAINED BY USG FUNDED INSTITUTIONS. CUEVAS RETORTED THAT HE HAD ALWAYS BEEN OPPOSED TO THE POLICY OF PROVIDING EQUAL ASSISTANCE TO THE CONFEDERATIONS WHICH HE SAID WAS IMPOSED ON HIM BY AIFLD AND THE AFL-CIO.

3. CUEVAS CALLED MERCADO A TRAITOR TO THE WORKING CLASS FOR HIS STATEMENTS TO THE MEDIA CONCERNING THE IAF GRANT AND ALLEGED THAT MERCADO WAS MOUNTING A CAMPAIGN TO PRESSURE THE GOC INTO NOT ESTABLISHING THE BANK.

4. CUEVAS SAID THAT HE WOULD DENOUNCE MERCADO BEFORE THOSE PRESENT AT THE ORIT CONGRESS.

5. LABOR ATTACHE CALLED ON MERCADO ON JAN 21. CTC LEADER SAID HE WOULD MAKE MORE PUBLIC STATEMENTS DENOUNCING THE IAF GRANT, WHICH HE INSISTED VIOLATED A LONG UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE GOC AND THE TWO DEMOCRATIC CONFEDERATIONS THAT THERE WOULD BE EQUAL PARTICIPATION OF THE TWO CONFEDERATIONS IN THE BANK, AND THAT THE GOC WOULD ASSIST THEM WITH A GRANT OF 2 MILLION PESOS TO BE DIVIDED EQUALLY, TO BUY SHARES IN THE BANK. HE ALLEGED THAT THE UTC SECRETLY OBTAINED THE IAF GRANT IN ORDER TO DOMINATE THE BANK AT THE EXPENSE OF THE CTC, AND THAT THIS WAS PART OF CUEVAS EFFORTS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO WEAKEN THE CTC.

6. FINALLY, MERCADO SAID, IT SHOULD BE CLEAR TO ALL THAT UNITY BETWEEN THE TWO ORGANIZATIONS IS OUT OF THE QUESTION, CITING THIS LATEST EPISODE AS ONLY ONE OF A SERIES DEMONSTRATING THE UNRELIABILITY OF THE UTC.

7. COMMENT. WHILE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT COOLER HEADS WILL PREVAIL BEFORE THE TWO UNION LEADERS ARRIVE AT THE ORIT

CONGRESS, PROBABLY JAN 24, THERE I NO ASSURANCE THAT THEY
WILL NOT USE THIS FORUM TO ATTEMPT TO DISCREDIT EACH
OTHER. THE SLENDER THREAD OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO
ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAS DEVELOPED OVER THE LAST SEVERAL
YEARS HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY STRAINED AND THE IAF GRANT HAS
ONCE AGAIN BROUGHT TO THE SURFACE THE INTENSE
PERSONAL RIVALRY BETWEEN TWO IMPORTANT LABOR LEADERS OF
INTERNATIONAL STATURE.
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